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SUNDAY:	MONDAY:	TUESDAY:	WEDNESDAY:	THURSDAY:	FRIDAY:	SATURDAY:
MARRYBELL MADURO	ANDERSON BAHAMON	JEAN PAUL	MAILLEYN ALVARADO	MARRYBELL MADURO	MAILLEYN ALVARADO	RICKY THOMAS
SINGER	SINGER	SAXOPHONIST	VIOLINIST	SINGER	VIOLINIST	GUITAR
6:30 TO 8:30 P.M.	6:30 TO 8:30 P.M.	6:30 TO 8:30 P.M.	6:30 TO 8:30 P.M.	6:30 TO 8:30 P.M.	7:00 TO 9:00 P.M.	6:30 TO 8:30 P.M.

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New Christian artists push genre boundaries with rap, Afrobeats and R&B

By CHARLOTTE KRAMON
Associated Press

A new wave of artists is transcending traditional notions of Christian music, drawing young global audiences to faith-based rap, Afrobeats and R&B.

Often boosted by social media, many of them got their start with independent labels or by uploading self-made songs to streaming platforms. Now, bigger labels and streaming services are catching on.

People are looking for "something soul-feeding, something forward-looking, positive," said James "Trig" Rosseau Sr., CEO of Holy Culture Radio. "They find a sonic coziness, but then a message that is feeding that need."

Interest in the music has proliferated since 2022, said representatives at Spotify and Amazon Music. However, breaking into the mainstream has been challenging for this group of mostly Black and/or African artists who are making music that can't always be defined and that hasn't been well-represented in the Christian music industry.

"Over the last two years, there's something happening momentum-wise, and it still feels underground, but now it's starting to get the visibility that it's deserving," said Angela Jollivette, who previously oversaw the Grammy Awards' Gospel/Contemporary Christian categories and runs Moonbaby Media, a music supervision and production company.

Christian rap's star rose around 2013 when rapper Lecrae Moore won his first Grammy. Today, newer artists are modernizing Christian hip-hop. Florida rappers Caleb Gordon and Alex Jean are among those leaning into rap's subgenres as well as Afrobeats, the popular blend of West African music styles. Nigerian Christian Afrobeats pioneer Limoblaze is now signed to Moore's Reach Records label, and Afrobeats artists such as CalledOut Music and "The Voice UK" winner Annatoria are on the rise.

Christian rapper and influencer Lecrae Devaughn Moore photographed in Atlanta on Wednesday, Nov. 5, 2025.

Associated Press

"I think the world is now like, we can hear ourselves represented," Moore said. "To me, that is a picture of the faith. We're a global faith."

Dallas-based Ghanaian Canadian artist Ryan Ofei, a former member of Christian act Maverick City Music, pivoted to Afrobeats-R&B fusion, releasing his first solo album in 2024. He said the growing vein of Christian music is less "preachy" but still a "massive evangelistic tool" for nonchurchgoers.

"You can bob your head, you can have a long drive," Ofei said. "But the whole time, you're still edified, and you can still feel the presence of the Lord."

Family-friendly but not childish

Christian rap, R&B and Afrobeats artists say they want to write music they can play around their children but without sacrificing the craft.

"I'm giving them sounds that are ghetto and cool, but not profane," said rapper Jackie Hill Perry. She called Christian rap today less intellectual and more "vibe-driven" than when she started more than a decade ago.

Rapper Childlike CiCi got her start as a secular artist recording in "trap houses," a term for drug-selling homes where some of hip-hop's biggest names also propelled trap music to popularity. A few years after becoming a Christian in 2019, Childlike CiCi sought to make music she couldn't find rooted in faith but inspired by trap and its more aggressive counterpart, drill.

"When people think of Christian hip-hop, they expect it to just be like Kidz Bop," she said. "I think it's bigger than that. Like, the Bible is not Kidz Bop."

Some artists found Christian rap corny at first. But London-based Limoblaze said Moore's music transformed his faith "from a religious practice to an actual relationship with Jesus."

Capitalizing on Afrobeats' global popularity and his own growing audience, Limoblaze met with Spotify, Apple Music, YouTube and Amazon about three years ago.

Months later, Amazon launched its first Afrogospel playlist, he said.

"I think Christian Afrobeats is slowly but eventually going to be on a mainstream level, at least in the African music scene," said Limoblaze.

Compared to mainstream counterparts, streaming numbers for these subgenres remain smaller, but their fanbases' dedication is outsized, said Lauren Stelato, programming lead for Christian and gospel music at Amazon Music.

"These young artists and young fans are bringing faith into sounds and spaces that they really already live in," she said. "The audiences are responding to it because it feels natural."

Some artists have collaborated with popular Christian acts like Forrest Frank, and Christian rap is breaking into secular, mainstream spaces. Christian rappers Gordon, Jean, nobigdyl., Hulvey, Jon Keith and GAWVI performed at the 2024 Rolling Loud Miami festival. Months later, Rolling Loud gave a solo set to Christian rapper Miles Minnick, who spoke this year on a Grammy panel and performed at a Super Bowl event.

Alternative to traditional worship

Churches have long resisted acts that veer from tradition, like Kirk Franklin's modern gospel sound in the 1990s, said Emmett G. Price III, dean of Africana studies at Berklee College of Music. Price added that although there is still resistance, newer artists are important because "you don't have a homogenous Black church."

When traditional worship songs don't resonate, there's nothing "ungodly" about wanting God in other music, Moore said.

Artist CèJae said her R&B songs are still rooted in the Bible, but they also explore personal themes like heartbreak and struggling to pray regularly.

"We don't get the feeling part sometimes," she said of traditional gospel. "Or if we do, it sometimes seems like a recycled message."

U.K.-based alternative artist Sondae said the sonic diversity helps people find music they can connect with whether that's gospel, Afrobeats or contemporary worship songs that appeal more to white audiences.

"I feel like God has blessed his harvest in such a way that there's different flavors of fruits popping up everywhere, and everyone's getting blessed," he said.

Challenges in a broadening genre

Christian rap, R&B and Afrobeats artists still lack the same industry buy-in, financial resources and radio exposure contemporary Christian and secular artists have, said Jollivette, who is working with the Recording Academy to develop a rhythm and praise Grammy. Some have won in existing faith-based Grammy categories by competing against artists with vastly different sounds.

Christian music is also a lyric-based term, so categorizing artists in a "generation that doesn't really draw genre distinctions" is challenging, said Mat Anderson, senior vice president of label strategy and operations at Sony Music Entertainment's Provident Entertainment.

Observers say the quality of Christian hip-hop and its counterparts has improved over the years, but skeptics remain.❑

After 800 episodes, 'The Simpsons' creators look back and ahead

By LIAM McEWAN
Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Eight hundred episodes, 37 seasons, and one four-fingered family that refuses to age.

As "The Simpsons" hits a milestone few series have ever glimpsed this weekend, the architects behind Springfield are reflecting on the choices that turned crude 1987 shorts from "The Tracey Ullman Show" into a cultural juggernaut.

"We've done 800 episodes, and I'm really glad we didn't do a big overarching story," said Al Jean, executive producer and former showrunner. "You always return to square one at the end of the show. And there's no question that was a big influence on the longevity."

For Matt Selman, the current showrunner, the Simpsons' refusal to age is a liberation that simultaneously raises questions about the weight of their long history: "Do these characters have the emotional memory of the 800 things that have happened to them? I don't really know the answer to that."

Meanwhile, show creator Matt Groening views reaching nearly four decades' worth of production as a triumph tinged with perfectionism.

"I've spent 38 years now trying to get them to draw the characters correctly," Groening said. "We've got to figure out how to shift perspective and do it more cinematically and we're always trying to improve."

Episode 800, "Irrational Treasure," airs Sunday on Fox.

Matt Groening, from left, Nancy Cartwright, and Matt Selman arrive at a celebration for "The Simpsons" 800th episode, "Irrational Treasure," on Friday, Feb. 6, 2026, at The Fonda Theatre in Los Angeles.

Associated Press

The voices behind Springfield

Nancy Cartwright arrived at her 1987 audition expecting to read for Lisa Simpson. She had other ideas.

"Hi Matt. Nice to meet you. I was out there and I noticed that there's Lisa, that's fine, 8-year-old middle child, but then there's this Bart," Cartwright recalled saying. "I'd kind of like to do him."

Groening agreed to the "switcheroo" immediately. "She completely channeled him," he said.

Nearly four decades later, Cartwright notes that "there are still people that yet don't know that it's a woman that does the voice."

The role has become inseparable from her identity. "It's become such a part of my lifestyle. I'm used to doing it all the time, and I'm not looking forward to the day when we're done," she said.

Lisa Simpson's defining characteristic emerged just as spontaneously. Animator David Silverman, who drew the original outline for the show's iconic opening sequence, recalled a production meeting where the middle Simpson child lacked a signature moment.

"We don't have a gag for Lisa, we have a gag for everybody else. What should we do for Lisa?" Silverman reflects. "And I suggested, 'Well, maybe she's in the band and maybe she plays a tuba.' And so Jim (James L. Brooks) said, 'Well, I don't know about the tuba but what if she played the baritone saxophone? In fact, what if she played it really well? That could be her character, she could be the genius kid of the family that nobody appreciates.'"

From controversy to institution

The show's path to becoming a global institution was paved with early outrage. Groening remembers when Bart Simpson was deemed a threat to American classrooms he relished every moment of it.

"That was the best move ever when the culture decided 'The Simpsons' was too outrageous," Groening said. "And if you wear a Bart Simpson 'Underachiever' T-shirt to school, you got kicked out. That was the best thing for us."

When Fox executives asked whether the show targeted kids or adults, Groening said the creative team made an immediate choice that defined everything that followed. "We said it's for adults," he recalled. "And that was the best instantaneous decision that we made because it meant that we could do a wide range of jokes."

As the internet arrived, so did a new breed of critic. Groening admits the "Comic Book Guy" character Springfield's perpetually dissatisfied nerd was created as a direct response to early online fans declaring every new episode the "worst episode ever."

"I like analysis and I like criticism," Groening said. "But 'That's not funny' and 'That's boring,' that annoys me. Those are to me the laziest reactions you can get."

His prediction for the show's future carries characteristic sarcasm. "Well, I can tell you this because we are time travelers," Groening joked. "The Simpsons will be on in a thousand years. Still on. Unfortunately, fans are going to say the show's been going downhill for the last 500 years."

Predictions, presidents and pop stars

The show's supposed ability to predict the future including a 2000 episode where Lisa inherits the presidency from "President Trump" has become internet legend.

Jean offered a simple explanation: "Well, the predictions are accidental. We're not from the future."

But modern technology has turned prophecy into fraud, according to Selman.

"The predictions are all fake now," Selman said. "They're just done by AI. And people all go, 'Oh my God, how do they do it?' I throw up my hands in despair for the gullibility of mankind."

Guest stars have become a hallmark of the series, from Michael Jackson to Lady Gaga to the Rolling Stones. Jackson's 1991 appearance in "Stark Raving Dad" came after he cold-called Groening.

"I was working late in my office at 10 p.m. My phone rang … 'Hi, this is Michael Jackson.' And I hung up because, you know, it was obviously a prank. And he called back, 'No, really, don't hang up,'" Groening recalled.

While the show secured the King of Pop in Season 3, one prestigious group has consistently declined invitations to Springfield. "The ones that never said yes were U.S. presidents and I don't think we're ever going to do that," Jean said.

'The Simpsons' in the streaming era

Disney's 2019 acquisition of 21st Century Fox brought "The Simpsons" to Disney+, introducing the show to new generations and generating some exclusives not factored into the 800-episode count.

"The fact that 'The Simpsons' is on Disney+ has really exposed us to a new generation," said Selman. "If it's an 8- to 12-year-old's favorite show for two or three years of their life before they move on to something else, that's a big win for us."

Streaming has also liberated the show from commercial constraints. "The thing that's loosened up for us is the time, because things are tied to commercial breaks," Groening said. "We still do three acts, or sometimes four acts, because we're on the Fox network. But for the stuff for Disney, we go wild. And we can stretch out a little bit."

No end in sight for 'The Simpsons'

For Jean, the show's greatest achievement is in the personal connections forged over decades. "I'll have people come up to me and say, 'My parents were splitting up. I was going through a bad time as a kid and your show got me through it.' And I just would go, 'Oh, this couldn't mean more.'"

Silverman sees that same impact as the fulfillment of a lifelong ambition. "People often asked me when I wanted to be a cartoonist and animator and said,❑

Relationship experts and couples say romance doesn't need grand gestures to thrive

By CHEYANNE MUMPHREY
Associated Press

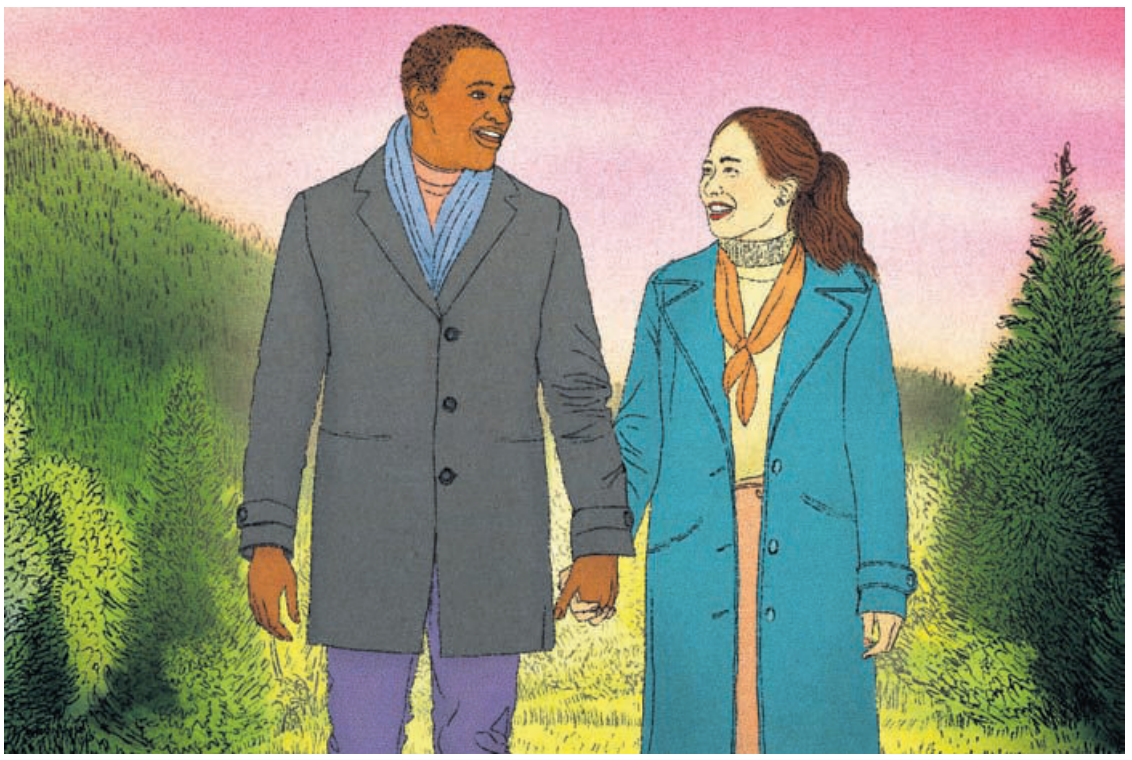
Doing something romantic for Valentine's Day does not need to involve a heart-shaped box of chocolates, roses or an atypically expensive dinner, according to relationship experts.

In fact, therapists encourage couples craving intimacy and a deeper connection to focus less on grand gestures and more on expressing love with mundane acts that recognize what matters to their partner.

Romance is not one size fits all. For some people, it means holding hands, opening a car door or drawing a bath for their lover. Others respond to receiving a hilarious text, coffee in bed or an offer to run a nagging errand. Either way, demonstrating kindness and care in small ways over time helps to support relationships as they evolve, says Traci Lee, a licensed marriage and family therapist in Dallas.

"The more that early on, you as a couple are able to establish good habits of whatever romance is going to look like for you, the better it is," Lee said.

Couples counselors and people in relationships share ideas for showing a romantic partner love throughout the year:



(Associated Press Illustration / Peter Hamlin)

Romance is constantly evolving

Early in a relationship, it doesn't take much to show romantic intentions, but that changes as couples learn more about each other as individuals, discover what their partner needs for emotional and physical well-being, and experience life together.

"Depending on what stage of the relationship you're in, romance can mean different things," Lee said. For example, couples with parenting and caregiving responsibilities have less time to devote to each other than they did during the honeymoon phases right after they started dating or got married.

Gabrielle Gambrell, who lives in New York with her husband of seven years and their two children, thinks romance "should be an evolution" and therefore takes work. One piece of advice she received before getting married stuck with her: Never stop dating. "You keep romance alive by continuously dating," Gambrell said. "No matter how busy or what happens in the world, me and my husband have a mandatory date night. And every single date night, we leave the date energized and happy and grateful, and reminded what means the most to us."

Taking the pressure off Valentine's Day

Valentine's Day carries a heavy burden of social pressures, fantasies from movies and books, and individual desires and expectations that often go unexpressed. All can be managed with planning and communication, experts say.

"Some people will say, 'If I have to tell my partner what to do, then it won't be romantic.' But I have to remind people that their partner is not a mind reader," Lee said. "I try to blow up the myth that romance can only happen if it's created spontaneously out of thin air."

Gambrell, who describes herself as a planner by nature, says she typically starts asking her husband questions about their plans for Feb. 14 days before. Making assumptions about the best way to celebrate Valentine's Day and comparisons with other couple's relationships are likely to lead to disappointment, she said.

"Love is not perfect. Romance is not perfect. Relationships, there's nothing perfect about them, but they are beautiful," she said.

Clarence Smith IV, a 29-year-old middle school teacher and video content creator in Phoenix, remains a big believer in using traditional acts of chivalry to communicate respect and care for his girlfriend, such as positioning himself closer to the curb when they are walking together on a street.

"Romance today involves more seen gestures - let this be seen, let this be shown, let this be big," Smith said, adding that in his dating experience some people see his gentlemanly behavior as old-fashioned. "I do little things like that, and they're looked at as superbly impactful. We don't do this anymore. But to me, baby, this is basics."

Express love beyond February

While some relationship experts recommend establishing traditions around meaningful holidays, anniversaries and birthdays, others say that creating rituals to mark new seasons or weekends are equally valuable as part of the foundation for merging lifestyles and routines.

Lee says she often explains to her clients a popular analogy in the counseling industry: If you get in a fight with your partner and apologize with a dozen roses, that would be great, but bringing one rose every day for 12 days would communicate consistency and dedication.

She asks patients, "What are some small things that you can do that are going to be a way for you to show up for your partner in the way that they need it?"

Gambrell says gift-giving is the way she prefers to receive and show love. As a result, it touches her deeply and comes across as a romantic gesture when her husband buys her a scratch-off lottery ticket or stationery item, like a pen or notebook, at the store.

"It's knowing that you're thinking about me, that I'm on your mind, that you stop what you're doing to think of me," she said.

Smith encourages people to not be afraid of expressing love regardless of how experienced a dating life or how long a relationship they have.

"Do not be afraid to love in your own way," he said. "It's always worth it. You always win in the end."❑

A Wave of Hope: Japanese Scientists Create Ocean-Friendly Plastic That Simply Disappears

Breakthrough plant-based material dissolves completely in seawater, offering a glimpse of a cleaner future for our oceans

In a development that sounds almost too good to be true, scientists in Japan have achieved what many thought impossible: creating a plastic alternative that completely vanishes in salt water without leaving behind the microscopic pollution that has plagued our oceans for decades.
This isn't just another incremental step in the fight against plastic pollution it's a potential game-changer that reminds us why investing in science and innovation matters now more than ever.

This picture taken on January 12, 2024 shows plastic nurdles at La Pineda beach in Tarragona.

The Problem We've Been Fighting
For years, environmentalists and ocean lovers have watched with growing concern as plastic waste accumulates in our seas. Even biodegradable plastics, despite their good intentions, often break down into microplastics tiny particles that persist in marine environments, entering the food chain and affecting everything from plankton to whales.
But this new plant-based material offers something radically different: true disappearance.

How It Works: Nature's Solution
The Japanese research team developed their innovation by looking to nature itself for answers. By using plant-based polymers and natural compounds, they've created a material that maintains the durability and flexibility we need from plastics during use, yet transforms completely when it meets salt water.
Unlike conventional plastics that fragment into smaller and smaller pieces, this material actually dissolves at the molecular level. The ocean doesn't inherit tiny plastic particles it receives organic compounds that marine ecosystems can process naturally.
Think of it as the difference between dropping an ice cube versus a rock into warm water. One disappears entirely; the other remains forever.

Real-World Impact
The implications stretch far beyond the laboratory. Imagine fishing nets that, if lost at sea, would dissolve rather than becoming ghost nets that trap marine life for decades. Picture packaging from coastal communities and cruise ships that wouldn't contribute to the Great Pacific Garbage Patch. Consider single-use items for beach events that could safely wash away if accidentally left behind.
This innovation could revolutionize industries that operate near or on the ocean from shipping and fishing to tourism and marine research.
Any sector that struggles with the risk of ocean plastic contamination now has a pathway toward a solution.

A Testament to Human Ingenuity
What makes this story truly inspiring isn't just the science it's what it represents about human potential. Somewhere in a Japanese laboratory, researchers refused to accept that ocean plastic pollution was an unsolvable problem. They asked "what if?" and then put in the painstaking work to find out.
Their success reminds us that the environmental challenges we face, while serious, are not insurmountable. Innovation, creativity, and dedication can unlock solutions we haven't yet imagined.

The Road Ahead
Of course, questions remain. Scientists will need to conduct extensive testing to ensure the dissolved compounds are truly harmless to marine ecosystems across different conditions and environments. Manufacturing processes will need to be scaled up economically. Regulatory frameworks will need to be developed.
But these are the exciting challenges of implementation, not the dead-ends of impossibility. The fundamental breakthrough has been achieved now it's about refining and deploying it.

What This Means for All of Us
This development offers something precious in an age often dominated by environmental anxiety: tangible hope. It's a reminder that while we should absolutely reduce our plastic consumption and improve our recycling systems, we can also innovate our way toward better materials.❑

People and robots are getting ready to celebrate the Lunar New Year in China

By E. EDUARDO CASTILLO
Associated Press
BEIJING (AP) — It's not just people in China, the robots are also getting ready to celebrate the Lunar New Year.
Friday was dress rehearsal day for four cute humanoid robots, each about 95 centimeters (3 feet) tall at a mall in western Beijing. Curious onlookers stopped to watch.

Each robot got a colorful lion costume and within minutes the moves started: Bend the knees, up, to the left, to the right, shake the mask, and do it all again!
Ahead of the Lunar New Year celebrated next week, and as part of different "fairs" and activities around Beijing, some venues have been busy setting up their stages and props.
For a second year in a row, one of the fairs will be devoted to technology and yes, again robots will take center stage.
People will see them dancing and also them stacking blocks on top of others to make a little tower, skewering hawthorn berries onto a stick coated with a syrup, a popular sweet snack or playing soccer.

"This year, the number of our robots has increased a lot," said Qiu Feng, a member of the organizing committee. "They will perform dance, martial arts, Peking Opera, poetry and soccer."❑

Humanoid robots in lion dance costumes perform on stage during a media preview of a robotic temple fair ahead of Lunar New Year in Beijing, China, Friday, Feb. 13, 2026.
Associated Press

Benin's lovers less row-mantic as apps replace waterway rendezvous

Ganvié, Benin

For decades a narrow waterway in Ganvie, Benin has been a discreet rendezvous point for young couples to meet -- safe under cover of darkness, far away from strict families and prying eyes.

Now the so-called "lovers' channel" in west Africa's largest lake city risks becoming a relic of the past, the once-adventurous secret meeting place rendered obsolete by loosening social norms and dating apps.

"It's a beautiful story, but today... we talk, we get to know each other without hiding," Anna, 22, a student and native of the city often billed as the "African Venice", told AFP.

"We don't need all that extravagance to find our soulmate. The channel isn't as essential as it used to be," agreed Roslin Dantin, a 30-year-old cattle farmer.

"We see the lovers' channel as something for old people. For our generation, there are better options. Technology and social media have replaced those symbols," added Augustin Gbenoukpo, a 24-year-old student.

Jeannine, a 28-year-old seamstress, holds a bouquet and baloons she received by her husband Florent, a local fisherman, while they leave La Place des Amoureux, as they canoe after celebrating ahead of Valentine's Day in the lake city of Ganvié, on February 10, 2026.

-'Nowhere else to meet'-

Elise Avlessi, who met her tailor husband on the waterway about 15 years ago, acknowledges that times have changed.

"Today, even from his bed, a young man can make a move on a girl who's on the other side of the world," she told AFP.

But new technology can also mean less privacy and intimacy.

"Before, we did everything in secret, we let the relationship develop away from prying eyes," she said, a touch nostalgic.

"We had nowhere else to meet freely. In the past, our parents wouldn't allow us to go out," she said of her early relationship with her now-husband.

Without the meeting spot, "our relationship would have been very difficult to develop. It was practically the only way to flirt."

Her husband, Joseph Hougebe, remembers whistling into the night, eagerly waiting to hear a paddle tapping against the hull of a dugout canoe coded signals in the darkness.

"At night, you couldn't tell the men from the women in the canoes. So they used slogans, pre-arranged keywords," Jonas Zannou-Zoki, a tour guide, explained to visitors.

Ritual

Time may be marching relentlessly on, but for those who once listened for their soulmates' voices carrying across the dark water, the canal still holds a kind of magic.

Just a few paddle strokes away, a "Lovers' Square" has been created in tribute.

Emilienne Atoukou, the site manager, points to the "sacred canary" -- a kind of small, perforated jar -- placed in the centre of a dugout canoe, into which lovers throw cowrie shells, so that they fall through it into the canal.

"People come to write their vows on cowrie shells that they throw here," she said.

Then they go to the "promises corner" in the square. "It's an intimate space, dedicated to fidelity and love," she explained.

She said the square has been consecrated by dignitaries of all religious denominations in Ganvie, making it a respected place, both spiritual and symbolic.❑

Serb-zero: the 'iceman' seeking solace in extreme cold

Serbia

Walking for hours through thick snow on a windswept Serbian peak, wearing only boots, shorts and a backpack, might sound like the start of a harrowing survival story but for Vladimir Stevanovic, that was just a relaxing stroll.

Over the past 15 years, Stevanovic has been hiking icy slopes, meditating in deep snow and plunging into frozen lakes as part of a routine he believes offers health benefits and mental clarity.

Serbian archaeologist Vladimir Stevanovic, known on social media as "Serbia's Iceman", meditating on thick snow at the Besna Kobila mountain in Serbia's far south, near the city of Vranje, on January 30, 2026.

"You surrender yourself to this cold because you know the cold won't hurt you," the 41-year-old told AFP at one of his local swimming spots, a frozen lake at the foot of Besna Kobila in Serbia's far south.

So far, he said his most extreme effort was braving -10C for seven hours, stripped to the waist in hiking boots and running shorts.

He says he can withstand floating in icy water for up to 15 minutes.

'Inner peace'

His frigid exploits have earned him social media fame, with thousands following "Serbia's Iceman" on Instagram.

But he says he doesn't do it for records or followers.

"My goal, when I enter the water, is to gain a state of meditation, of inner peace."

In recent years, "cold exposure therapy" such as ice baths and swimming in frozen lakes has gained global popularity. Perhaps the most committed advocate is Dutchman Wim Hof, who has made a career of espousing its purported health benefits.

While some evidence supports parts of the claims, there is no clear scientific consensus. Doctors also warn against more extreme practices due to the potential of triggering pre-existing health conditions.

For Stevanovic, although his initial inspiration was the spiritual practices of Tibetan monks, the general appeal of icy plunges is a little less mystical overwhelming shock of "extreme cold".

"It helps us not think of anything else."

"So this is very good for handling stress."

'A little bit strange'

But for those curious to try it, the scantily clad hiker who is also an archaeologist and dedicated martial artist warned against diving straight in.

"When you put cold water on you, it is very unpleasant for the first one or two seconds, and then you get very relaxed.

And as you get relaxed, it doesn't bother you anymore."❑

Some tips to take care of yourself during Aruba's Carnival Parade 72

(Oranjestad)—Carnival season is coming to an end and the community is preparing to celebrate the last two major festivities that close out the biggest season of the year. These are the Grand Carnival parades in San Nicolas and Oranjestad. It will surely be a weekend full of atmosphere and color, but we must also keep our safety in mind.

Below are a few tips to protect yourself and your family during the final days of Carnival 72.

Children under 5 years old should stay home!

This may be a controversial topic, but it's important to mention. The reality is that children under 5 years old do not enjoy Carnival the way adults do; it is a very busy day, the music is too loud, there are too many people crowded together, and they are surrounded by adults consuming alcohol, among other things. All of this creates an unsuitable environment for a child. For this reason, it is recommended to leave small children at the hotel, whether with family or friends who will not be attending the parade.

Know your limits and always have a designated driver

Speaking of alcohol consumption, it is important to know your limits and stick to them. We know Carnival is a festive day, and alcohol consumption is inevitable. Even so, it is advised to avoid excessive drinking and, if you choose to drink alcohol, make sure you always have your designated driver friend; the person at a party or celebration who is designated not to drink alcohol so they can safely take home those who have been drinking.

Protect your skin and your ears

Although many people think it is important only for children to wear earplugs during Carnival, it must be emphasized that this is just as important for adults. The safe decibel limit for our hearing is around 70 dB for a prolonged period. However, large events such as a parade can generate up to 120 dB of noise, which can cause irreversible damage to our hearing. Therefore, be conscious about wearing earplugs and protecting your ears during the parade.

Another important part of the body to protect is your skin. Aruba is known for its hot sun, and during the major Carnival parades, people are more exposed to the sun's rays and can burn much more easily. It is important to wear sunblock (at least SPF 30) and reapply it several times during the parade. It is also advisable to wear a hat, sunglasses, and clothing that can protect you from the sun. Remember that sunblock must be reapplied every 1–2 hours to ensure proper protection.

Hydrate yourself; drink water!

In addition to consuming beverages such as alcohol, juice, or soft drinks, it is also important to stay hydrated with water. Be mindful to drink water from time to time to prevent dehydration.

Don't wait, seek help!

Finally, we would love to inform our visitors that during the parade there will be police patrols and Red Cross volunteers to assist anyone with a medical emergency. If you feel unwell or strange, do not wait to get help—seek assistance from personnel immediately! This can prevent serious consequences for your health.

Aruba Today once again urges you to take care of yourself and those around you. Carnival is an integral part of our culture, and we enjoy it much more when we celebrate it in a safe and healthy environment!❑

Weekly Free Slot or Table Play for all qualified Club members.

Free Shirt Sunday!

Get a FREE Alhambra T-Shirt when you earn 250 Slot Points on Sunday with your Players' Club card!

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Shalom Body & Soul Spa | Moments & Memories Jewelry
Magnet Perfume Jewelry & Cosmetics | The Lazy Lizard
Shalom Hair & Nails Bar | Twist of Flavors | Dunkin Donuts
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30 years loving Aruba…

Dedicated visitors from New York are back and ready to pass on the torch

(Oranjestad)—This year, Aruba welcome back a group of dedicated visitors who are celebrating almost 30 years of sharing their common love for the island. Lucia Brienza, one of the faithful visitors, tell us a bit about their story and how the group is entering a new chapter in their yearly tradition.

Lucia tells us that the group—consisting of around 30 friends, most of them from New York—started visiting the island almost 30 years ago. With a common bond of working hard in season and lucky enough to escape the winter, this group of friends have creating a yearly tradition of visiting Aruba, which they intend on passing on to their kids and grandkids in this new chapter of life.

Lucia shares that they are all retired, having worked in the irrigation business for years. "Any properties we visited were all checking out the sprinklers!" she jokes.

Their trips to Aruba mean a great deal to the bunch, as they spent years creating fond memories with their families, diving, kite sailing, swimming and visiting the National Park. At night, the adult would hit the casino, beach bars and karaoke. At sunset, they gathered and shared stories together.

As Lucia recalled, "We laughed and loved Aruba, then and now. We have seen the changes, but one thing that doesn't change is the beauty of the people and our love for Aruba."

Aruba Today would like to congratulate and thank them for almost 30 years of being dedicated visitors to the island. Here's to many more!❑

Explore Aruba!

(ORANJESTAD)—Aruba Today collected some things to do BEYOND the beach. Aruba, located 15 miles north of Venezuela in the warm waters of the southern Caribbean, is home to beautiful white-sand beaches, 82-degree days, and thus ideal for the perfect beach day. But we are also blessed with some of the warmest people in the world and our island is 19.6 miles long and 6 miles across, with a total area of 70 square miles. Bit more to discover than the white stretch on the coastline we say. Let's mention some of these hidden gems.

Arikok National Park

The Arikok National park is worth the ride. We love the hikes that are guided by the park's rangers whose job is to maintain trails and protect natural resources. The flora and fauna are beautiful and the historical sites tell you about the island's indigenous roots. If you are not up to walking, you can drive through the park, one way or another this park is a great place to spend an entire day. Cruising through the landscape you end up at some of the most stunning beaches like Dos Playa or Daimara Beach. In total, the park consists of 34 square kilometers of protected nature with a richness of animals living in it. The Aruban whiptail lizard (cododo), Aruban cat eye snake (santanero) and endangered rattle snake (cascabel) are just some of them, you can also admire these close in the park's Visitors' Center. For more information, visit the website www.acf.aw

The Lourdes Grotto

Named in commemoration of the famous French religious landmark, was created under the guidance of a priest named "Erkamp" and parishioners in the year 1958. The grotto, a shrine built into the rocks is located in Seroe Preto, just off the main road to San Nicolas. A statue of the Virgin Mary, weighing 700 kilos, was hoisted into place in the grotto. Every year, on February 11 (feast of Lady of Lourdes), a procession leaves from the St. Theresita church in San Nicolas to the grotto, where a mass is performed. The grotto is located road-side and can be visited daily. Just make sure you park safely in the event you wish to stop for pictures at this location.❑

Planning on snorkeling? Get to know our Picuda!

(Oranjestad)—If you're ever planning on snorkeling during your vacation on Aruba, you may spot fish that you can't recognize. One of these may be the "Picuda", a very common fish that swims all year long in the waters of Aruba. Here's some information about the beloved Picuda.

Well known is the Picuda on the island—Barracuda in English. Its scientific name is Sphyraena barracuda. It is a widely caught fish. It is found throughout the year in our waters, where it is a so-called "ambush predator" that stays still or floats in the water waiting for its prey to approach so it can attack it with lightning speed. It is well known for fishermen, especially for its white flesh in fish soup. In fishing culture, there are many other names, such as Pecho blanco, Blekito, Banana, or Bleki. The names vary according to size.

Picuda can be found in our waters around our island throughout the year. Picuda, in our waters, is edible without any problem. Picuda is also a highly sought-after fish by sports fishermen or recreational fishermen because it puts up a good fight once hooked. It can be caught via trolling from a boat, casting from shore with a line or rod, or by jigging, casting the lure (artificial bait) and moving it with certain rod motions.❑

Picture courtesy of the Department of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries (Santo Rosa).

Place names in San Nicolas and their origins

(Oranjestad)–If you're ever taking a tour of Aruba, San Nicolas would definitely be on your itinerary. From relaxing on the white, sandy beaches of Baby and Roger's Beach, to exploring the prehistoric caves of Quadirikiri and Fontein, you are taking in a full view of what San Nicolas has to offer. But did you know that you are also passing through areas whose names have historical origins? Here are a few place names in San Nicolas and their origin story.

Sero Colorado

On your way to Baby or Roger's Beach, you'll pass by the famous Red Anchor at what was once the entrance to the Colony residential community and be greeted with red soiled hills by the coast. This is Sero Colorado. Named after the 30-meter, deep red, limestone hill, "Sero Colorado" translates to "Colored Hill". Sero Colorado has deep historical ties with the once-thriving phosphate industry in the area. Matter of fact, there are still underground shafts and passages deep in Sero Colorado from the time of phosphate mining. In 1958, the refinery at the time, Lago, adopted this name for the residential section of its employees.

Vader Piet

Another well visited area, Vader Piet is located in the Arikok National Park. Recognizable sites within this area include the Wind Mills and the Quadirikiri Cave. The origin of this name is part historical and speculation, as there are slight deviations from what actually happened.

In 1829, Pieter Lampe was a planter and the person responsible for governing this remote area. As the story goes, Pieter was well known and beloved for his kindness and good treatment of his employees, and was therefore also called Vader Piet (Father Piet). However, he was tragically murdered—some speculate at the hands of a slave. For his work and good heart, the area was named after him.

San Nicolas

Of course we can't forget San Nicolas itself. Much like Vader Piet, the origin of the name San Nicolas has so far two different accounts. In the literal sense, "San Nicolas" translates to "Saint Nicolas", leading many to believe that this district was named after a Spanish saint. Though one account does support this with the theory that the district was named after the saint by Spanish colonizers, the other account is much less divine, but does refer to an influential figure in the area.

Nicolaas van der Biest was a successful landowner during the time of the phosphate boom in late 19th century Aruba. Back then, landowners (most, if not all of them men) were referred to as "Shon" by their subordinates. So, the district was originally named after Shon Nicolaas. Over time, the name evolved into what is now San Nicolas.

Source: "Aruba: Short History" by Dr. J. Hartog.

Buying a Condo in Aruba - A Smart Caribbean Investment

The Caribbean offers incredible real estate opportunities, but not all islands are equal in terms of affordability, rental potential, and lifestyle. Aruba stands out as a top choice for buyers seeking a mix of investment upside and quality of life, thanks to its stable economy, tourist-friendly rules, and natural beauty.

1. Competitive Pricing Across the Caribbean
Aruba offers condos at prices that are often lower than other premium Caribbean destinations, especially for beachfront or near-beach properties:

Key takeaway: Aruba offers a "sweet spot" — lower entry prices than most luxury Caribbean markets while still providing prime beachfront and high-tourism rental opportunities. Thus, high price appreciation potential.

2. Short-Term Rentals: Flexible in Tourist Zones
A major advantage of Aruba is its friendly short-term rental environment in key areas:

Tourist zones with open STR potential: Eagle Beach, Palm Beach, Oranjestad City Center, Tierra del Sol, and Baby Beach. Owners can list properties without numeric night caps or excessive bureaucracy.

Residential neighborhoods: Purely residential areas like Noord, Malmok, Rubi and Ponton may face restrictions or scrutiny if owners rent for short-term, ensuring community stability.

This is an important contrast with other Caribbean islands where STR regulations are stricter across the board, often requiring licenses, permits, and night limits.

3. Lifestyle & Natural Beauty: Baby Beach and Rodger's Beach
Beyond investment, Aruba offers unique lifestyle advantages:

Baby Beach, near San Nicolas, is a shallow, protected lagoon perfect for families, snorkeling, and peaceful relaxation.

Compared with crowded resort beaches in other Caribbean destinations, Baby Beach and Rodger's Beach offers a more natural and secluded setting without sacrificing accessibility.

Aruba's climate is outside the hurricane belt, ensuring year-round comfort and consistent tourism, which benefits both residents and rental income.

4. Why Investors Prefer Aruba
Stable real estate market with steady appreciation.

100% foreign ownership allowed, clear legal protections under Dutch civil law.

High rental yields in tourist zones (6–10% on prime units).

Balanced zoning approach — rentals thrive in tourism areas, while residential areas are protected.

Infrastructure & connectivity: direct flights from US/Europe, reliable utilities, and good healthcare.

Conclusion
Aruba is a sweet spot in the Caribbean for condo buyers:

Lower entry prices than many luxury islands

Flexible short-term rental rights in core tourist zones

Stable, hurricane-free environment with year-round tourism

Unique natural settings like Baby Beach for a peaceful lifestyle and those who love the outdoors.

Compared with other Caribbean islands, Aruba combines investment potential, lifestyle appeal, and rental flexibility, making it a standout choice for buyers looking for both returns and a slice of island paradise.❑

ISLAND	ONE-BEDROOM CONDO	TWO-BEDROOM CONDO	THREE-BEDROOM CONDO	Notes:
Aruba	$230,000–$385,000	$300,000–$1,175,000	$440,000–$1.65M	***Prime areas like Eagle Beach & Baby Beach Beach offer strong rental potential***
Bahamas	$350,000–$600,000	$500,000–$1.5M	$750,000–$2.5M+	***High luxury market, stricter rental rules in some areas***
Barbados	$250,000–$500,000	$400,000–$1.2M	$600,000–$2M	***Popular for expats, but short-term rental restrictions exist in residential zones***
Turks & Caicos	$400,000–$700,000	$600,000–$2M	$900,000–$3M	***Very high per-square-foot prices, primarily luxury market***
Cayman Islands	$450,000–$750,000	$700,000–$2.2M	$1M–$3.5M	***Limited inventory, high property costs, strict STR licensing***
Sources: Global Property Guide, local Caribbean real estate reports				

Aruba to me

ORANJESTAD — You are back or still enjoying your vacation?… we would like to portrait you! By inviting you to send us your favorite vacation picture while enjoying our Happy Island.

Complete the sentence: Aruba to me is ……. Send your picture with that text (including your name and where you are from) to: news@arubatoday.com and we will publish your vacation memory. Isn't that a special way to keep your best moments alive? Please do note: By submitting photos, text or any other materials, you give permission to The Aruba Today Newspaper, Caribbean Speed Printers and any of its affiliated companies to use said materials, as well as names, likeness, etc. for promotional purposes without compensation.

Last but not least: check out our website, Instagram and Facebook page! Thank you for supporting our free newspaper, we strive to make you a happy reader every day again.❑

Get to know the history of the gold industry on Aruba

(Oranjestad)— We have talked about the Bushiribana Gold Mill Ruin before and its brief history during the gold industry on Aruba, but get to know a little more about the history of the "Aruban Gold Rush."

The first hint of gold on Aruba actually dates back to 1725, when rumors about gold being found in dug up treasure chests of the Spanish colonial era prompted the first official exploration for gold on the island, commissioned by the Dutch West India Company. Under the leadership of Mr. Paulus Printz, a three-year search was conducted on Aruba, to no avail. Though they found some specks of gold, it was not enough to motivate a further search, and the assignment was discontinued by Printz himself.

It wasn't until 100 years later, in 1824, when a young farmer boy named Willem Rasmijn found a lump of gold while out herding his father's sheep in the area of Rooi Fluit on the north coast. His father took it to a local merchant who then sold the lump for $70. Unbeknownst to the boy and his father, they quite literally struck gold, and as word got out, a gold fever spread among the locals who started searching for more gold.

When the colonial governor in Curacao, Governor Cantz'laar, heard about the news, he sent his adjutant, Capitan van Raders, to start harvesting gold. This was in July 1824. In august of that same year, the governor followed suit to the island, accompanied by high-ranking military officials. When citizens started swarming the area in search for gold, The Netherlands sent more troops to safe guard the gold.
Prominent places where gold was found was in Daimari, Wacobana, Arikok, Rooi Fluit, Hadicouradi and later West punt, where gold ore was found. Because of a lack in advanced technology and materials to harvest the gold, the process took a more primitive approach: Clay rocks containing traces of gold were left to dry in the sun. Then, workers would start chipping the clay away on a large canvas to catch the gold particles that were left behind after the wind blew away the dust from the clay.

In the harvest period of 1824-1825, there was a total of 71,000 kilos collected through commissioned harvesting. Locals themselves reportedly found about 25 pounds worth of gold in the nearby rivers. The following years after that first big harvest, commission work fell off, and in 1828, the director of the goldmines, Johan Gravenhorst, decided to halt harvesting.

Almost 40 years later, the London-based Aruba Island Gold Mining Company Ltd. was granted concession. The firm built their gold mines on Bushiribana, and in the port of Oranjestad a long road that connected the gold mill to the port. The ores themselves came from Sero Plat en Sero Cristal.

By this point, workers were still using primitive methods to harvest the ores. For example, when someone had to go into the mines, there were no stairs or lifts; the person had to be brought down in a big bucket, with two or more workers holding the bucket by a thick rope above ground.
Aruba Island Gold Mining Company Ltd. reportedly operated until 1899, and right after the Aruba Gold Concession Ltd. was established, coincidentally also based in London. This time, the gold mill in Balashi was built, and more mines were dug up all around the island. The gold ores that were found were transported via track engine, locally called the "trekinchi". Despite being more equipped for the job, the Aruba Gold Concession Ltd. could not produce any real profit, and so the concession was terminated just eight years later, in 1908.

A local firm, the "Aruba Goud Maatschappij" (Aruba Gold Company) took over the concession, along with all the materials and equipment. In the beginning, the company saw good profit, and for a while, the island's economy depended primarily on the mining and harvesting of gold. But just like its predecessors, the streak of luck for the Aruba Gold Company came to an end when WWI broke out.
The main reason why production stopped this time was reportedly because of a lack in dynamite for extracting the ores from the mines, as well as a lack in raw materials like German cyanide

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for the refining process. By the time the war ended, the equipment that was left at Balashi were too old to use again. After the war, gold production on the Aruba was left to a standstill.
According to an issue in Aruba Esso News paper in 1953, Henny Eman wanted to start up digging again, this time using independent miners. He argued that there was proof of more gold to be discovered. Plus, hiring independent miners would boost the island's employment rate.

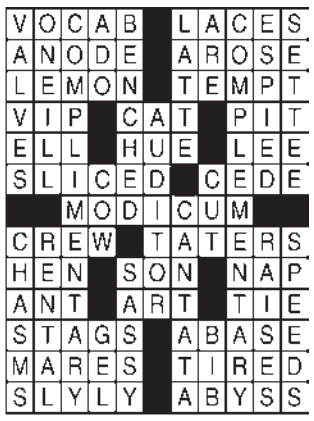
When it was proven that gold was in fact still present, the executive board on the island promised to fund the project only if the gold dug up proved to be valuable. However, nothing else was reported after this, so it could be concluded that there was no real profitable market on the island anymore.
The ruins of the Bushiribana and Balashi Gold Mills are still standing, and open for the public to visit. These structures offer a glance into the past, to a time where Aruba experienced one of its first wave of industrialization. Today, these structures are persevered as historical monuments.❑

Source:
1. **"De Kolibrie op de Rots (en meer over the geschiedenis van Aruba)" by Evert Bongers.**
2. **Aruba Esso News, 1953 issue.**

ARUBA TODAY

CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

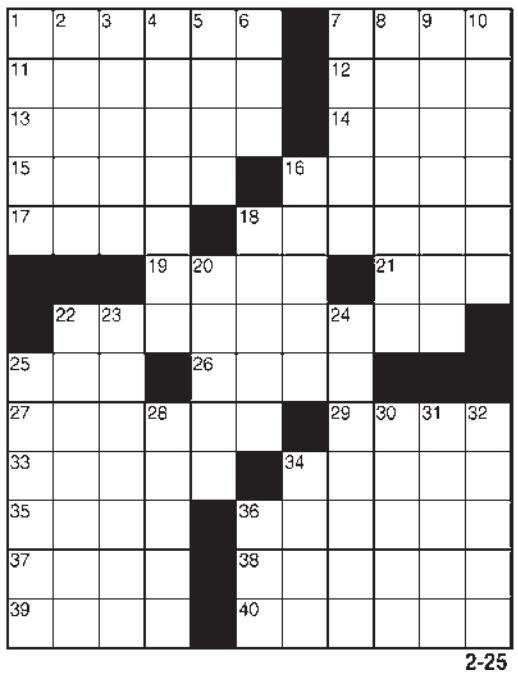


ACROSS

1 Set up, perhaps
7 Wise one
11 Feel empathy
12 Trolley's kin
13 Patch type
14 Jason's ship
15 Body of law
16 Wading bird
17 Was aware
18 Wonder of music
19 Regarding
21 Stop
22 Greenish-blue color
25 Light metal
26 Edit menu choice
27 Suspects' stories
29 Surfer's ride
33 Gave a score to
34 Lukewarm
35 Mayberry kid
36 Trifling
37 Shading
38 Right away
39 Hangs low
40 Overcharges

DOWN

1 New York art museum
2 Showed over
3 Unescorted
4 Famous racehorse
5 School near Windsor
6 Private room
7 Map division
8 Shows up
9 Joke in a routine
10 Hammed it up
16 Got up
18 Amazes
20 Tenarmed swimmer
22 Mildflavored fish
23 Joining forces
24 Grateful reply
25 Foretelling cards
28 Edible roots
30 Imitative
31 Singer Gill
32 Periphery
34 Visitor to Oz
36 Price setting



2-25

AXYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

2-25 **CRYPTOQUOTE**

YS YA ZEGX SH JEYC, UTS YS YA LHGAI MIKIG SH ZEKI SGYIX SH ATBBIIX.

— SZIHXHGI GHHAIKICS

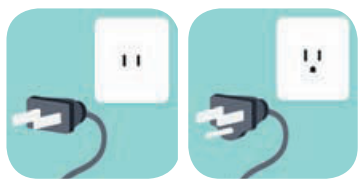
Cryptoquote: CHANGE WILL NOT COME IF WE WAIT FOR SOME OTHER PERSON OR IF WE WAIT FOR SOME OTHER TIME. — BARACK OBAMA

Cruise ship Schedule: Feb. 9 - 15 2026

			ARR	DEPT	BERTH	
MON	09	MARELLA DISCOVERY 2	08.00	20.00	C	1
TUE	10	MAJESTIC PRINCESS	07.00	18.00	B	1
		SERENADE OF THE SEAS	08.00	23.00	C	1
		OASIS OF THE SEAS	08.00	23.00	I	1
WED	11	BRITANNIA	07.00	18.00	B	1
		CELEBRITY SILHOUETTE	08.00	23.00	C	1
		SEA CLOUD SPIRIT	08.00	14.00	I	1
		FREEWINDS	06.00	****	E	1
THU	12	MS RENAISSANCE	09.00	18.00	B	1
		CARIBBEAN PRINCESS	09.00	22.00	C	1
		CARNIVAL MAGIC	09.00	22.00	I	1
SAT	14	AIDAPERLA	09.00	21.00	C	1
SUN	15	NORWEGIAN PEARL	08.00	17.00	C	1
		FREEWINDS - Dept.	****	22.30	E	-

Helpful tips for your stay on Aruba

(Oranjestad)—When traveling to another country, especially for the first time, it is always better to be over-prepared than under-prepared. That is why we have a list of basicbut important information that we think may come in handy to Aruba's visitors.



Electrical power

Aruba generally operates on 110V to 127V supply voltage and 60Hz. There are also three types of outlets used on the island: type A with two flat prongs; type B with two flat and one grounding prong, and on occasion, type F with two round prong and two earth clips on the side. However, Type A is most commonly found in homes and establishments.

Drinking water

The water that flows through the sinks of every house, hotels and other establishments is distilled and perfectly safe to drink. Aruba's drinking water exceeds WHO's international standards for water quality, so there is no need to buy bottled water from the store.

Safety

Since February 2024, Aruba has been categorized as the safest country in the Caribbean by The Telegraph, and many tourist that visit have often told us how they feel safe to explore the island or walk around at night. However, rare incidents do occurs, so keep yourself and your belongings safe.

SUDOKU

To play sudoku, use logic to fill the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the numbers 1-9 only once. Puzzle difficulty increases from Monday to Sunday.

King Classic Sudoku

	4						7	
7		3	4					
9	6		1		5		4	
8			7	1		4		
6	3							2
2					6		5	
		1		6		7		9
					1	6	8	
4							1	

Difficulty: ★★★★ 2/14

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Answer to previous puzzle

4	8	3	9	6	1	7	2	5
5	7	1	4	2	3	9	6	8
6	2	9	7	8	5	3	1	4
2	5	4	6	7	8	1	9	3
1	9	7	3	4	2	5	8	6
3	6	8	5	1	9	4	7	2
9	4	2	1	5	6	8	3	7
8	1	5	2	3	7	6	4	9
7	3	6	8	9	4	2	5	1

Difficulty: ★★★★ 2/13

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International crew en route to space station

Cape Canaveral, United States

Four astronauts were on their way to the International Space Station Friday after they successfully embarked on their research mission to the orbiting laboratory.

The US space agency's international Crew-12 blasted off at approximately 5:15 am local time (1015 GMT) aboard a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket from the Cape Canaveral launch site in Florida, according to a NASA video feed.

The journey takes approximately 34 hours -- the astronauts are expected to arrive at the ISS and dock by about 3:15 pm eastern time on Saturday.

They will replace a crew that returned from the station early due to a medical issue with one of its members.

The pre-dawn launch was delayed by two days over adverse weather forecasts across the US East Coast, including high winds that could have complicated any potential emergency maneuvers.

But superstitions aside, Friday the 13th proved to be their lucky day.

"I understand it's the first time NASA has ever launched on Friday the 13th," said Steve Stich, a NASA official who coordinates ISS launches, with a laugh.

"Pretty amazing times."

Crew-12 is composed of Americans Jessica Meir and Jack Hathaway, along with French astronaut Sophie Adenot and Russian cosmonaut Andrey Fedyaev.

"We have left the Earth, but the Earth has not left us," Meir said as the astronauts ventured into space. "When we gaze on our planet from above, it is immediately clear that everything is interconnected."

"We are one humankind."

The travelers are replacing Crew-11, which returned to Earth in January a month earlier than planned in the first medical evacuation in the space station's history.

The ISS, a scientific laboratory orbiting 250 miles (400 kilometers) above Earth, has since been staffed by a skeleton crew of three.

NASA declined to disclose any details about the health issue that cut the previous mission short.

Once the astronauts arrive, they will be one of the last crews to live aboard the football field-sized space station.

Continuously inhabited for the last quarter-century, the aging ISS is scheduled to be pushed into Earth's orbit before crashing into an isolated spot in the Pacific Ocean in 2030.

NASA astronauts Jessica Meir (C), commander, and Jack Hathaway (L), pilot, ESA (European Space Agency) astronaut Sophie Adenot (R), and Roscosmos cosmonaut Andrey Fedyaev (2ndL) walk out as they prepare to travel to the SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket with the company's Dragon spacecraft at Space Launch Complex 40 for the Crew-12 mission at Cape Canaveral Space Force Station in Florida, on February 13, 2026.

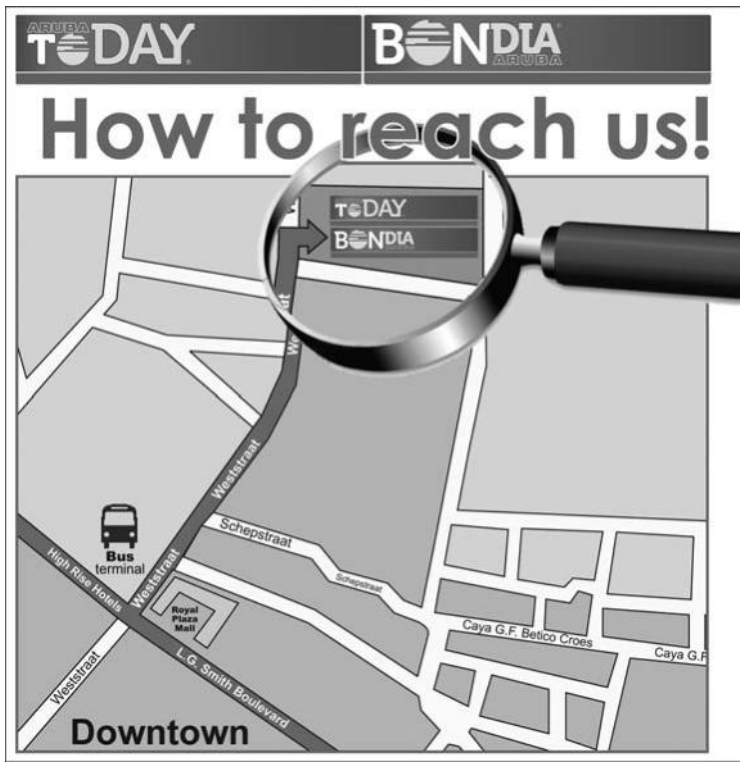
Microgravity and the human body

The ISS, once a symbol of warming post-Cold War relations, has been a rare area of continued cooperation between the West and Russia since Moscow invaded Ukraine in 2022.

However, the space station has not entirely avoided the tensions back on Earth.

In November, Russian cosmonaut Oleg Artemyev who had long been planned to be a member of Crew 12 was suddenly taken off the mission.

Reports from independent media in Russia suggested he had been photographing and sending classified information with his phone while training at a SpaceX facility. Russian space agency Roscosmos merely said he had been transferred to a different job.❑



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DOCTOR ON DUTY

Oranjestad
Hospital 7:00 pm / 10:00pm
Tel. 527 4000

San Nicolas
Imsan 24 hours
Tel.524 8833

PHARMACY ON DUTY

Oranjestad:
del Pueblo: Tel.582 1253
San Nicolas:
Seroe Preto:Tel.584 4833

OTHER

Dental Clinic 587 9850
Blood Bank Aruba 587 0002
Urgent Care 586 0448
Walk-In Doctor's Clinic
+297 588 0539

EMERGENCY

Police	100
Oranjestad	527 3140
Noord	527 3200
Sta. Cruz	527 2900
San Nicolas	584 5000
Police Tipline	11141
Ambulancia	911
Fire Dept.	115
Red Cross	582 2219

TAXI SERVICES

Taxi Tas	587 5900
Prof. Taxi	588 0035
Taxi D.T.S.	587 2300
Taxi Serv. Aruba	583 3232
A1 Taxi Serv.	280 2828

TRAVEL INFO

Aruba Airport	524 2424
American Airlines	582 2700
Avianca	588 0059
Jet Blue	588 2244
Surinam	582 7896

AID FOUNDATIONS

Aruba Food Bank
Tel. 588 0002

FAVI- Visually Impaired
Tel. 582 5051

Alcoholics Anonymous
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ARUBA TODAY NEWS

How to watch the Daytona 500 and what to watch for in 'The Great American Race'

By The Associated Press

William Byron will try to become the first driver in history to win the Daytona 500 three consecutive years when the 68th running of "The Great American Race" opens the NASCAR season on Sunday.

Byron won last year's event in overtime after race leader Denny Hamlin got spun on the final lap, igniting a multicar crash. Byron ended up passing eight cars on the last lap to return to victory lane.

Can he make it three in a row? Four others Richard Petty in 1975, Cale Yarborough in 1985, Sterling Marlin in 1996 and Hamlin in 2021 came up short in threepeat bids at NASCAR's signature race.

The field includes seven other previous Daytona 500 winners, most notably three-time winner Hamlin and seven-time NASCAR champion Jimmie Johnson. Hamlin is trying to bounce back from a heartbreaking loss in the 2025 season finale and the December death of his father. Johnson, meanwhile, is again driving the No. 84 Toyota for his team, Legacy Motor Club.

This will be the first non-exhibition race since NASCAR and two teams 23XI Racing and Front Row Motorsports settled a federal antitrust lawsuit that threatened the series. The outcome guaranteed permanent charters for 36 teams.

The offseason also included the death of retired driver Greg Biffle, who was among seven people killed when his plane crashed in North Carolina just a week before Christmas.

How to watch the Daytona 500

William Byron, (24) runs on the track before a crash during the first of two NASCAR Daytona 500 qualifying auto races at Daytona International Speedway, Thursday, Feb. 12, 2026, in Daytona Beach, Fla.

Associated Press

The race will be aired on Fox. Mike Joy, Clint Bowyer and Kevin Harvick are in the booth. Larry McReynolds provides analysis. Jamie Little, Regan Smith and Josh Sims cover pit road. Fox Deportes, MRN and SiriusXM NASCAR Radio also offer live broadcasts, and the race will be streamed on the Fox One and the Fox Sports app.

What time is the race?

The green flag drops shortly after 2:30 p.m. EST.

Who is on the front row?

Kyle Busch earned his first Daytona 500 pole, landing the No. 1 starting position during qualifying Wednesday. It came as he gets ready to start his 21st Daytona 500 and tries to end the longest current skid in the garage.

"We just got to get the job done so we can stop talking about it," Busch said.

Chase Briscoe also will start on the front row.

Who raced their way into the field?

Justin Allgaier and Corey Heim secured two of the four open spots during pole qualifying. Casey Mears and B.J. McLeod locked up the final two spots in the field through 150-qualifying races Thursday night.

Corey LaJoie, Chandler Smith and JJ Yeley failed to qualify for the Daytona 500. Anthony Alfredo initially earned the final spot in the starting lineup in the second qualifier, but NASCAR disqualified his car and the berth went to McLeod.

Allgaier drives for Dale Earnhardt Jr., whose famous father died 25 years ago following a last-lap crash at the Daytona 500.

Who is the favorite?

Former series champions Ryan Blaney and Joey Logano are the favorites (plus-1200), with Hamlin and Byron close behind at plus-1400, according to BetMGM Sportsbook.

The defending series champion is Kyle Larson. And keep an eye on 19-year-old driver Connor Zilisch, who won 10 races in the Xfinity Series last season and is considered a rising star.❑

Taylor Swift rumors spiked ticket sales for Pebble Beach golf tournament

Kansas City Chiefs' Travis Kelce, left, fist bumps Keith Mitchell after making a putt on the 10th green at Spyglass Hill Golf Course during the first round of the AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-Am golf tournament in Pebble Beach, Calif., Thursday, Feb. 12, 2026.

Associated Press

By DOUG FERGUSON
AP Golf Writer

PEBBLE BEACH, Calif. (AP) — Taylor Swift boosted ticket sales to the AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-am without even being there.

Pebble Beach had an extra buzz Friday morning with rumors swirling in the cool Pacific breeze Swift would be there to watch her fiancé, Kansas City Chiefs tight end Travis Kelce, playing in the PGA Tour event that combines corporate CEOs and celebrities with golf's best.

Alas, Swifties, it was just another pretty day at Pebble Beach. It still was good news for the Monterey Peninsula Foundation, which runs the event.

Tournament director Steve John said when Kelce was announced as playing in the pro-am, more than $60,000 in tickets were sold over the next 12 hours.

Swift is rumored to be in town. But she was not at Spyglass Hill on Thursday, where Kelce was playing with pro partner Keith Mitchell along with Mackenzie Hughes and retired NFL quarterback Alex Smith.

No matter. Pebble Beach is the main attraction, and John said some $21,000 tickets for the second round were sold between 6:30 p.m. Thursday and 6:30 a.m. Friday, two hours before Kelce played.

More than 1,000 spectators lined the left side of the first fairway at Pebble Beach, but all they saw was Kelce hitting his tee shot to the right, into and out of the trees, and along the cart path (he made a par).

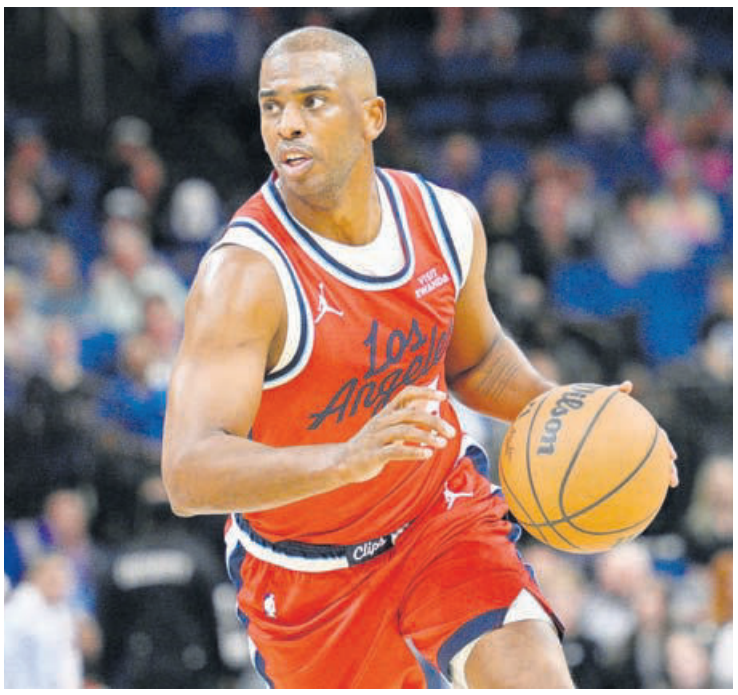
Sure, there was plenty of Chiefs gear in the crowd, one young girl wearing a Kansas City sweatshirt. The tournament has a long history of athletes over the years, including Ken Griffey Jr. playing in a group with Tiger Woods some 20 years ago. Roger Clemens once made a hole-in-one.❑

Chris Paul, the 'Point God,' retires as All-Star weekend begins, ending a 21-season NBA run

By TIM REYNOLDS
AP Basketball Writer

Chris Paul, the "Point God" who was a 12-time All-Star selection and two-time Olympic gold medalist, announced his retirement on Friday in the capper of a 21-season career that will surely merit induction into the Basketball Hall of Fame.

Paul made the announcement on the first day of the NBA's All-Star weekend at the home of the Los Angeles Clippers in Inglewood, California. Paul spent his final season an abbreviated one with the Clippers, who sent him home in December and wound up trading him to Toronto earlier this month.



Los Angeles Clippers guard Chris Paul drives to the basket during the second half of an NBA basketball game against the Orlando Magic, Thursday, Nov. 20, 2025, in Orlando, Fla.
Associated Press

The Raptors knew Paul would never play in Toronto, and that begged the question about whether the Wake Forest legend would try to finish the season with another team in pursuit of the thing he never got an NBA title.

The answer came Friday. He's done. He said last summer that he has hated missing events with his children over the last few years, and now he can devote himself much more to his family and other interests.

"It's time for me to show up for others and in other ways," Paul wrote on a social media post, announcing the decision.

He strongly hinted earlier this season that this year was going to be his last. Paul was a four-time All-NBA first team selection, and he ranks second in NBA history with 12,552 assists and 2,728 steals. He was the first player to score at least 20,000 points while recording at least 10,000 assists; LeBron James and Russell Westbrook have both since done that as well.

"It feels really good knowing that I played and treated this game with the utmost respect since the day my dad introduced me to it," Paul wrote. "It was the very first relationship I ever knew."

Paul played for New Orleans, Houston, Oklahoma City, Phoenix, Golden State, San Antonio and the Clippers during his career, spending the last four years with four different teams.

He also was a past president of the National Basketball Players Association instrumental in getting the league through the bubble season when the pandemic struck in 2020 and championed the NBA establishing better ties with Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

He's 15th all-time in regular season games played and 36th in points, was a six-time steals champion, five-time assists champion, a nine-time All-Defensive team pick, 11-time All-NBA selection and was part of the NBA's 75th anniversary team.

He's one of six players in NBA history to have reached $400 million in career earnings.

"I've been playing basketball since I was 4 years old, and there's nothing other than my family that brings me more joy than the hard work and all that stuff that goes into it," he said in 2024.

"Yeah, that's why we get to play a child's game and say it's my way of life."❑

American 'Quad God' Ilia Malinin carries 5-point lead into the free skate at Milan Cortina Olympics

By DAVE SKRETTA
AP Sports Writer

MILAN (AP) — Ilia Malinin, widely considered the best figure skater of this generation, could take a big step toward going down as one of the greatest ever Friday night when the American goes for gold in the men's free skate at the Milan Cortina Olympics.The 21-year-old known as the "Quad God" has a five-point lead over Japan's Yuma Kagiyama and France's Adam Siao Him Fa after the short program. That would be a big margin for anyone, but it could be insurmountable given who is in first place.

Malinin is undefeated over two-plus years, a stretch of 14 consecutive victories in full competitions. That includes the past four U.S. championships, the last two world titles, and a host of world records most crucially, the best mark ever for a free skate, a massive score of 238.24 points that pushed him to a 30-point victory at the Grand Prix Final in December.

Ilia Malinin of the United States competes during the men's figure skating short program at the 2026 Winter Olympics, in Milan, Italy, Tuesday, Feb. 10, 2026.

Associated Press

Kagiyama, the last man to beat Malinin, was second that day. Siao Him Fa finished in fifth.

"Being the favorite is one thing," Malinin said after his short program, "but actually getting it done and doing it under pressure and having the skate of your life to earn that medal is another thing. I don't want to get too ahead of myself and say that it's guaranteed that I'm getting that gold medal. Because, of course, I still have to put in the work."

Malinin decided to practice early Friday at U.S. Figure Skating's alternate training base in Bergamo, outside of Milan, rather than go through the usual warm-up practice. The rest of his group, including Kagiyama and Siao Him Fa, stepped on the ice at the Milano Ice Skating Area about 90 minutes before the free skate, but also about four hours before Malinin was due to perform.

He did the same for his short program so that he would not have to wait at the arena for such an extended period of time.

In truth, Malinin doesn't have to do much more than show up.❑

Surprise! U.S. women's curling team beats Canada for first time at an Olympic Games

By JULIA FRANKEL
Associated Press

CORTINA D'AMPEZZO, Italy (AP) — The U.S. women's curling team was surprised to learn that their defeat of Canada on Friday marked an Olympic first.

United States' Cory Thiesse, Taylor Anderson-Heide, Tabitha Peterson, and Tara Peterson in action during the women's curling round robin session against Canada, at the 2026 Winter Olympics, in Cortina d'Ampezzo, Italy, Friday, Feb. 13, 2026.

Associated Press

"If that's true," caveated Minneapolis native Taylor Anderson-Heide said after the 9-8 nailbiter, "I think we just played a really good game. They're No. 1 in the world."

Tara Peterson of Shoreview, Minnesota, chimed in: "It just always feels really good to beat (Canada skip) Rachel Homan. So any team to beat them, that's pretty impressive."

Since 1998, when women's curling was introduced at the Olympics, teams from the U.S. and Canada have played at least once in each Games. The U.S. had lost every time until Friday. The U.S. men have beaten Canada, notably in the Olympic final in 2018.

Canada's Team Homan has for years been considered the best in the world.

In Friday's match, the U.S. managed to capitalize on a few weak shots by Canada. After the win, the Americans walked together down the ice and back to their coaches, raising fists in triumph. Peterson, like Anderson-Heide, couldn't help but add a qualifier to her response to questions from The Associated Press: "Apparently, we've never beat them in the Olympics before. That makes it just extra special."

This year's American women's curling team like their Gen-Z men's counterparts meld approachability with ambition. Alongside Anderson-Heide and Peterson, the team includes skip Tabitha Peterson, who's Tara's older sister, as well as cool-as-a-cucumber Cory Thiesse, who has already won a silver medal in the mixed doubles event. Aileen Geving, from Minnesota, is an alternate.

Three of them have jobs other than curling, and three are mothers to young children. Tara is a dentist, Tabitha a pharmacist and Thiesse a lab technician.❑